DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 440 512 EC 307 802

AUTHOR	Haigh, John
TITLE	Accommodations, Modifications, and Alternates for Instruction and Assessment. State Assessment Series, Maryland/Kentucky Report 5.
INSTITUTION	Maryland State Dept. of Education, Baltimore.; National Center on Educational Outcomes, Minneapolis, MN.
SPONS AGENCY	Special Education Programs (ED/OSERS), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	1999-12-00
NOTE	26p.
CONTRACT	H023F50008
AVAILABLE FROM	NCEO Publications Office, 350 Elliott Hall, 75 E. River Road, Minneapolis, MN 55455 ($8). Tel: 612-624-8561; Fax: 612-624-0879; Web site: http://www.coled.umn.edu/nceo.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Evaluative (142)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Academic Accommodations (Disabilities); Compliance (Legal); *Disabilities; *Educational Assessment; Educational Policy; Elementary Secondary Education, State Programs; *Student Participation
IDENTIFIERS	Individuals with Disabilities Educ Act Amend 1997; *Testing Accommodations (Disabilities)

ABSTRACT

This report addresses issues on the use of accommodations, modifications, or alternatives for students with disabilities in large-scale educational assessment programs. First, a set of definitions from current literature and the 1997 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act are offered. The importance of agreement between instructional and assessment staff at the state, district, and school levels on the meaning and use of accommodations is stressed. A table presents Maryland's accommodations for scheduling, setting, equipment/technology, presentation, and responses. Another table summarizes possible modifications by the skill areas of mathematics, reading, written expression, scheduling and organization, and handwriting. A distinction is then made between "alternate assessment" and "alternative assessment." The following sections address the duration of uses of, limitations of, and procedure and process of accommodations, modifications, and alternates. Discussion of the importance of matching purposes of assessment and assessment decisions and decisions about students "in a gray area" with respect to curriculum and testing follows. (Contains 16 references.) (DB)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 440 512

STATE ASSESSMENT SERIES
Maryland/Kentucky
Report 4

Accommodations, Modifications, and Alternates for Instruction and Assessment

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

EC 307802

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

STATE ASSESSMENT SERIES
Maryland/Kentucky
Report 5

Accommodations, Modifications, and Alternates for Instruction and Assessment

Prepared By:

John Haigh
Maryland Department of Education

December 1999

The Maryland-Kentucky-NCEO Assessment Project encompasses a comprehensive array of research studies on assessment accommodations and alternate assessment approaches that facilitate inclusion of all students in statewide assessment programs. The planned research program include:

- comparative studies involving a qualitative examination of the assessment systems in Kentucky and Maryland;
- studies that involve secondary analyses of existing data bases to address critical technical and implementation issues in the assessment of students with disabilities; and
- experimental field studies that involve the collection of new data to address several technical issues crucial to the development and modification of state assessment policies.

This project is supported, in part, by a grant to the Maryland State Department of Education from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (Grant #H023F50008). Opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect those of the U.S. Department of Education or Offices within it.

Permission is granted to copy this document without charge. Additional print copies may be purchased for $8.00 from:

NATIONAL CENTER ON EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES
University of Minnesota • 350 Elliott Hall
75 East River Road • Minneapolis, MN 55455
612.624.8561 • Fax 612.624.0879
http://www.coled.umn.edu/NCEO

This document is available in alternative formats upon request.

Overview

One looks back with appreciation to the brilliant teachers,
but with gratitude to those who touched our human feelings.
The curriculum is so much raw material,
but warmth is the vital element for the growing plant and for the soul of the child.

– C.G. Jung

As students with disabilities are increasingly included in general education testing programs, clear understanding, communication, and use of the terms *accommodation, modification* and *alternate* become important. In the current era of educational reform and new federal requirements, the importance of a clear application of these terms needs to be reviewed, especially by members of the student's IEP team. Currently these terms may be used differently or interchangeably, and many times they have different meanings from state to state, discipline to discipline and even school to school. As more and more states include students with disabilities in their state and district-wide assessments, educators and parents will want to be clear on the language describing these various elements because they impact students and programs (see Table 1).

Table 1. Questions to Ask to Clarify Terms Used

	Assessment	Curriculum	Instruction
Accommodation(s)	Allowed ?	Maintained ?	Content ?
Modification(s)	Needed ?	Changed ?	Similar ?
Alternate	Available ?	Revised ?	Appropriate ?

Confusion sometimes occurs because all of the terms are used for instruction and assessment. With the 1997 reauthorization of Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA 97) and the appearance of all three terms, it is important that school personnel and parents agree on the definitions, uses, and implications of the terms. Not only are all three being incorporated into student IEPs, but they are also becoming items of increasing importance for restructuring efforts at the national, state, and local levels (Thurlow, Ysseldyke, & Silverstein, 1993). These terms are important for all students, including students with 504 plans and students with limited English proficiency, at all levels of instruction (from pre-school to post-graduate), and for all program environments (from the general education classroom to specialized settings). When attempting to match the terms to both classroom instruction and large-scale assessments, it is critical the terms and applications are clearly understood, with agreement between parents, professionals, and policymakers.

This report provides a summary of the purpose and challenges inherent in reaching agreement on the meaning of accommodations, modifications, and alternates for assessment and instruction

for special populations. The need to define these terms is expressed in many documents (see, for example, Thurlow, Ysseldyke & Olsen, 1998; Tindal, 1998; and Weston, 1999).

A suggested set of definitions from current literature and IDEA is presented. Since each of the three terms have meaning for assessment as well as instruction, they are presented with regulatory language (see Tables 2–4).

Legislative language further confuses the issue of determining what are allowable or acceptable assessment accommodations. For example, IEP definitions use the following language: "a statement of any individual modifications in the administration of State or district-wide assessments of student achievement that are needed in order for the child to participate in such assessment." 614(d)(1)(A)(iii)(v). If the modification(s) the student needs are greater than the agreed upon accommodations and are such that the test administrators/developers believe their results will be distorted, then the student may require another way of measuring progress or the construct being assessed. The construct, standard, indicators or benchmarks themselves may also need to be reviewed, extended, changed, or revised based on individual student need and or learning style. Here the purpose is critical. If the intent is individual *instructional* progress then modifications may be required to obtain or master a skill; if the intent is to *compare results* of groups of students, then a modification beyond the allowable accommodation may result in an inappropriate comparison.

Table 2. Accommodations: Meaning and Regulatory Language

Assessment	Instruction
An assessment that is administered with a change in one or more specific areas such as: setting, scheduling, equipment or technology assistance, presentation or response. It is important that the agreed specifics in each area mentioned do not change or lead to misinterpretation of the results of the assessment. (See example listing of accommodations)	Instructional practices should include a variety of accommodations that at least are permissible in large scale testing. For instructional purposes, additional scaffolding may be needed that extend beyond "allowable" accommodations to include any and all methodologies that might assist a student with learning.
"In general- children with disabilities are included in general State and district-wide assessment programs, with appropriate accommodations, where necessary." 612(a)(17)	"..to be involved and progress in the general curriculum.." 614(d)(1)(A)(iii)

When providing instructional or test accommodations for a special population student, there needs to be evidence of comparability of scores with non-accommodated students (Schmeiser, Kane, & Brennan, 1983). By the same token there must be fairness in assessments, especially if those assessments are required or used when reporting progress, or are linked to funding or

Table 3. Modifications: Meaning and Regulatory Language

Assessment	Instruction
A modified assessment has a greater probability of changing the actual construct being measured. The chance of a misinterpretation of score results becomes higher when more liberal changes are allowed. There needs to be specific agreement as to what constitutes or distinguishes a modification from an accommodation especially for assessments. In all probability they will vary from state to state or test to test and for different purposes.	Instructional modifications extend beyond the range of accommodations to include other supports, scaffolding, changes that allow the student access to the curriculum, instruction, materials, the classroom, etc. The modification is an alteration or adjustment that allows the student to gain access to instruction. (See example listing of modifications.)
See above 614 (d)(1)(A)(iii)(v)	"a statement of the special education and related services and supplementary aids and services to be provided to the child, or on behalf of the child, and a statement of the program modifications or supports for school personnel that will be provided for the child" 614(d)(1)(A)(iii) "the projected date for the beginning of the services and modifications described in clause (iii), and the anticipated frequency, location, and duration of those services and modifications." 614(d)(1)(A)(vi)

Table 4. Alternates: Meaning and Regulatory Language

Assessment	Instruction
An alternate assessment is one that measures a different construct, standard or indicator(s). The standard may remain the same but the indicators are different causing the multi-disciplinary team to choose an assessment other than the regular assessment.	Instructional alternates extend beyond the range of accommodations and modifications to the general curriculum, instruction, and materials, to extended, enhanced or different curricula, materials etc. (See example listing of alternates.)
"..develops guidelines for the participation of children with disabilities in alternate assessments for those children who cannot participate in State and district-wide assessment programs;" 612(a)(17)(A)(I)	

accountability issues. Those issues may include: developing and choosing methods for assessment, collecting assessment information, judging and scoring student performance, summarizing and interpreting results, and reporting assessment findings (Joint Advisory Committee, 1994).

Both accommodations and modifications are referred to in IDEA 97. Specific references to those are shown in Table 5. The term accommodations refers to the assessment, while references to modifications typically refer to programs.

Table 5. References to Accommodations and Modifications in IDEA 97

	Accommodations	Modification
Federal Register3/12/99	300.138 300.342 300.346	300.138 300.342 300.346 300.347
Appendices	A (p.12471) (p.12472) (p.12564) B (p.12545)	A (p.12471)

Purpose

The primary purpose for the use of accommodations, modifications, or alternatives for instruction is to enhance student learning and facilitate growth, and for assessment to benchmark progress, certification, or mastery. It is critical that instructional and assessment staff at the State, district, and school levels are in agreement on terms and implications for which accommodations to include when reporting assessment data, and any other allowable instructional modifications that are not allowed in state or district-wide assessments. Three levels of agreement need to be reached:

I. Between assessment/measurement and instructional staff on what specific accommodations are allowable (not allowable) in large-scale assessments. May include reference to, or assistance from, commercial publishers. Top down process with State or statewide stakeholder groups making initial recommendations and presenting for public comment.

II. Between assessment/measurement, instructional staff, and administrators on how to report results at each level and what are the consequences. It is important to assure that the public is aware of the differences in individual (if appropriate) and group scores and their purpose.

III. Between assessment/measurement and instructional staff on what specific accommodations are allowable (not allowable) in district-wide assessments, how they are reported, and what are the instructional consequences.

Types of Accommodations

Table 6 identifies a modified version of Maryland's specifically defined accommodations. It presents specific descriptions of allowable assessment and instructional accommodations. The process of reaching agreement between assessment and instructional personnel produced an agreed on a set of accommodations that was annually reviewed. The document also includes information on student participation, exemption and excuse guidelines, ESOL/LEP and 504 student inclusion, specific student case study examples, documentation forms, and request for review procedures (see "other" in each category). Accommodations (YES, NO, NA) are further delineated if the assessment might be a norm referenced test (NRT), a minimum competency, or criteria for diploma test, High Stakes Student (HSS), or criteria for a large scale Accountability Assessment for Schools or programs (AAS). The chart is presented for discussion or as an initial reference for those school teams reviewing accommodations for students with special needs. Other listings or descriptions can be found with GED Testing Services, current publishers, National Center for Educational Outcomes (NCEO), and through other State departments of education.

Table 6. Modified Version of Maryland's Accommodations

I. Scheduling Accommodations

Is the Accommodation Permitted? (Yes, No, or NA=Not Applicable and/or Not Available)

HSS	NRT	AAS		
Yes	Yes	Yes	A.	Supervised periodic breaks needed, within a continuous test session, without exceeding total time allowance
Yes	Yes	Yes	B.	Supervised breaks needed away from testing situation without exceeding total time allowed within same day
Yes	Yes	Yes	C.	Tests given regularly within a single day session may be administered over multiple days without exceeding total time allowances and without repeating previous items or tasks
Yes	*Yes	Yes	D.	Extra response and processing time (AAS time extensions must allow for participation in group activities.) (For NRT time extensions, review non-standard administration)
Yes	Yes	Yes	E.	Tests are administered at best time of day for student
Yes	Yes	Yes	F.	Other, proposed by Assessment Coordinator and Special Education or English as a Second Language or Limited English Proficient (ESL/LEP) staff and approved by Assessment Office and Special Education or ESL staff

*Consider invalidates comparison to national norms

Table 6. Modified Version of Maryland's Accommodations (continued)

II. Setting Accommodations

Is the Accommodation Permitted? (Yes, No, or NA–Not Applicable and/or Not Available)

HSS	NRT	AAS		
Yes	Yes	Yes	A	General education classroom, with special seating (front of room, carrel, etc.)
Yes	NA	Yes	B	General education classroom, with adjusted grouping
Yes	Yes	Yes	C	General education classroom, with additional school support person (instructional assistant, guidance, etc.) Support person is not to help student read or respond to items
Yes	Yes	Yes	D	General education classroom, with special education or LEP staff as support. Support person is not to help student read or respond to items
Yes	Yes	Yes	E	Small group setting with professionally certified teacher or school staff (speech pathologist, pupil personnel worker, content supervisor, guidance counselor etc.) as examiner
Yes	Yes	Yes	F	Small group setting with special education or LEP teacher as examiner
Yes	Yes	NA	G	Individual administration within the school building
Yes	Yes	NA	H	Individual administration outside school (home, hospital, etc.)
Yes	Yes	Yes	I	Other, proposed by Assessment Coordinator and Special Education or ESL/LEP staff and approved by Assessment Office and Special Education or ESL/LEP staff

III. Equipment / Technology Accommodations

Is the Accommodation Permitted? (Yes, No, or NA–Not Applicable and/or Not Yet Available)

HSS	NRT	AAS		
Yes	Yes	Yes	A	Large print test materials
Yes	Yes	Yes	B	Braille test materials
NA	No	*Yes	C	Calculator for mathematics testing for special education or 504 students only
Yes	No	**Yes	D	Use of electronic devices (mechanical speller, word processor, computer, augmented communication device, etc.)
Yes	Yes	Yes	E	Published or electronic bilingual dictionary (and English dictionary)
Yes	Yes	Yes	F	Other, proposed by Assessment Coordinator and Special Education or ESL/LEP staff and approved by Assessment Office and Special Education or ESL/LEP staff

* Entire tests are administered. Consider student's mathematics score is invalidated in the scoring/data processing process. (Specified in the Examiners Manual as tasks that do not list calculator as a required material for the task)
**Entire tests are administered. Consider student's language usage score is invalidated in the scoring/data processing process.

Table 6. Modified Version of Maryland's Accommodations (continued)

IV. Presentation Accommodations

Is the Accommodation Permitted? (Yes, No, or NA=Not Applicable and/or Not Available.)

HSS	NRT	AAS		
Yes	Yes	Yes	A.	Verbatim repetition of directions, as needed. Scripted directions may be re-read in English and/or synonyms provided in English.
Yes	NA	Yes	B.	Written copies of orally presented materials, that are found only in examiner's manual.
NA	NA	NA	C.	Accessibility to close-caption or video materials.
Yes	Yes	Yes	D.	Sign language interpreter, amplification, or visual display required for test directions/examiner-led activities.
*Yes	NA	Yes	E.	Verbatim audiotape of directions.
Yes	No	**Yes	F.	Verbatim audiotape of presentation of total test.
Yes	No	**Yes	G.	Verbatim reading of selected sections of test or vocabulary by examiner or assistant.
Yes	No	**Yes	H.	Verbatim reading of entire test to student by examiner or assistant.
Yes	Yes	Yes	I.	Other, proposed by Assessment Coordinator and Special Education or ESL/LEP staff and approved by Assessment Office and Special Education or ESL/LEP staff.

* Consider Not applicable to Functional Reading Test.
** Entire tests are administered. Consider student's reading score is invalidated in the scoring/data processing process.

V. Response Accommodations

Is the Accommodation Permitted? (Yes, No, or NA=Not Applicable and/or Not Available.)

HSS	NRT	AAS		
NA	Yes	NA	A.	For machine-scored tests, student marks answers in test booklet. (Transfer to answer sheet completed by school personnel.)
Yes	Yes	Yes	B.	For selected response items, student indicates answers by pointing or other method.
*Yes	NA	**Yes	C.	For constructed response (brief or extended) items, student uses word processor.
Yes	NA	**Yes	D.	For constructed response (brief or extended) items, student tapes response for later verbatim transcription by school personnel.
NA	Yes	NA	E.	School personnel may check student's transferred responses for alignment and completeness of hand-filled bubbles.
Yes	NA	**Yes	F.	For constructed responses (brief or extended) items, student dictates response to examiner for verbatim transcription by school personnel.
Yes	NA	NA	G.	For constructed response (brief or extended) items or oral presentation, student signs response to interpreter of the deaf/hearing impaired.
Yes	Yes	Yes	H.	Other, proposed by Assessment Coordinator and Special Education or ESL/LEP staff and approved by Assessment Office and Special Education or ESL/LEP staff.

* For English test, grammar and spell check functions are not permitted.
** Consider student's language usage score is invalidated in the scoring process.

These accommodations can be implemented singularly or in combination as a result of analysis of the individual needs of the student. A group or team of persons should make the recommendation for types of assessment accommodations that reflect the students' capabilities. In many cases, consultation with the student regarding the accommodation, prior to implementation, may be extremely valuable. Sometimes students will request that they not be given their accommodation; this is especially true as students reach upper grades and are tested with non-disabled peers.

Types of Modifications

Table 7 (adapted from charts used in Pennsylvania) lists possible modifications in subject and related skill areas as well as possible materials and technologies. Types of modifications can include and extend beyond allowable assessment accommodations.

The decision to put modifications into the IEP depends on whether it is an instructional or assessment decision or a program situation as described earlier in legislation.

Table 7. Possible Modifications

Skill Area: Mathematics

Instructional Modification	Possible Material	Technologies
•Reduce the number of problems •Eliminate the need to copy problems •Simplify and enlarge worksheets •Avoid mixing "signs" on a page •Minimize the number of lines on page •Provide more time for completion •Graph paper •Raised number lines •Large number lines •Life-sized number lines •Mnemonic devices •"Two-finger" counting aids •Instructional strategies •Multi-modal instruction •Computational aids •Color coding strategies •Peer support •Cross-age tutoring	•Abacus •Counters B spools, buttons, etc. •Containers for counters •Manipulatives •Flash cards •Set cards •Flannel board and numbers •Tactile numbers/signs •Automatic numbered stamp •Peer support •Highlighter •Personal chalkboard •Numbered fact charts	•Hand-held calculator* •Calculator with printout •Talking calculator •Language Master + Math •Tape recorder — • counting • basic facts • multiplication tables • combinations • formulas

* Not appropriate for calculations.

Table 7. Possible Modifications (continued)

Skill Area: Reading

Instructional Modification	Possible Material	Technologies
•Modifications: • extra time for completion* • shorten assignments • simplify text • highlight key concepts • provide chapter outlines •Instructional strategies • story frame • before, during, after echo reading • use positive approach • story mapping • vary approach • multi-modality instruction •Information organizer •Structured study guides •"What-you-need-to-know" chart •Study carrel for individual work •Peer support •Cross-age tutoring	•Magnifying bars •Page magnifiers •Colored acetate •Word window •Line marker •Flash cards •Letter cards •Word cards •Sentence cards •Tactile letters and words •Magnetic board and letters •Felt board and letters/words •Colored paper clips to mark pages •Notebook tabs •Post-it tape flags •Peer support •Highlighter	•Digital Book System •Tape recorder* •"Books on Tape" programs •Record books/reading material •Headphones •Language Master •Speaking Language Master •Word Master •Electronic dictionary*

* Not appropriate for writing.

Skill Area: Written Expression

Instructional Modification	Possible Material	Technologies
• Modifications extra time for completion* shorten assignments • Instructional strategies • use content outlines • "webbing" strategies • process writing strategies • writing/story starters • use positive approaches • Study carrel for individual work • Formulate sentences aloud • Use Afinger-for-spacing strategy • Color coding strategies	• Note cards • Word cards • Sentence cards • Clipboards • Pocket dictionary • Pocket thesaurus • Peer support • Highlighter	• Tape record thoughts before writing • Tape record story to proof-read • Headphones • Electronic dictionary* • Electronic thesaurus • Word Master • Speaking Dictionary Companion • Electric eraser

* Not appropriate for writing.

Table 7. Possible Modifications (continued)

Skill Area: Scheduling and Organization

Instructional Modification	Possible Material	Technologies
• Bulletin board schedule • Pocket schedule • Schedule in notebook • Appointment book • A ssignment sheets • Reminder cards • Strategies to keep work space clear • Strategies to organize desk • Study carrel for individual work • Color coding strategies • Peer support • Cross-age support • Homework journal • Structured study guides • Post signs and label areas in the room • Tape a schedule on the desk	• Pocket organizer / planner • Personal organizer • Clipboards • Stapler • Peer support • Sticky notes for reminders • Notebook tabs • Post-it tape flags • Colored paper clips • Highlighter • Storage cubicles	• Electronic memo / schedule masters • Electronic pocket organizer/planner • Schedule/assignments on tape • Digital diary • Electric stapler

Skill Area: Scheduling and Organization

Instructional Modification	Possible Material	Technologies
• Bulletin board schedule • Pocket schedule • Schedule in notebook • Appointment book • A ssignment sheets • Reminder cards • Strategies to keep work space clear • Strategies to organize desk • Study carrel for individual work • Color coding strategies • Peer support • Cross-age support • Homework journal • Structured study guides • Post signs and label areas in the room • Tape a schedule on the desk	• Pocket organizer / planner • Personal organizer • Clipboards • Stapler • Peer support • Sticky notes for reminders • Notebook tabs • Post-it tape flags • Colored paper clips • Highlighter • Storage cubicles	• Electronic memo / schedule masters • Electronic pocket organizer/planner • Schedule/assignments on tape • Digital diary • Electric stapler

Table 7. Possible Modifications (continued)

Skill Area: Handwriting

Instructional Modification	Possible Material	Technologies

• Peer support
• Different kinds of paper
• Different colors of paper
• Different line spacing / line colors
• Tape paper to the desk
• Chalk board practice
• Instructional strategies:
  • tracing exercises
  • talk-through letter formation
  • walk-through letter formation
  • write letters "in the air"
  • dot-to-dot
  multi-modality instruction
• Modifications:
  • adapt tests to "fill-in-the-blank"
  • use multiple choice / true-false
  • provide additional time*
  • shorten assignments
  • photo-copy notes, etc.
• Try different writing implements
• Paper position
• Student position
• Avoid using short pencils
• Peer dictation
• Cross-age tutoring
	• Peer support
	• Pencil holders/grips
	• Large/primary pencils
	• "Cubby" sized crayons
	• Markers
	• Grease pencils
	• Acetate sheets/transparency markers
	• Paper stabilizers
	• Arm stabilizer/arm guide
	• Light pen
	• Dycem for positioning
	• Tactile letters
	• Stencils/templates
	• Clipboards
	• Tracing paper
	• Electric eraser
	• Correction tape/pen/fluid
	• Rubber name stamp
	• Other rubber stamps
	• Bingo blotter to make selections
	• Labels/stickers with name, etc.
	• Automatic number stamp
	• Highlighters
	• Individual Easel
	• Slant board/wedge
	• Personal chalkboard
		• Typewriter
		peer support
		typing/keyboarding instruction
		positioning device
		positioning student
		arm stabilization
		wrist rests — movable/stationary
		custom keyguard
		correction tape/pen/fluid
		
		• Word Processors:
		peer support
		typing/keyboarding instruction
		portable/stationary preferences
		lightweight options
		down-linking to computer
		positioning device
		positioning student
		arm stabilization
		wrist rests — movable/stationary
		custom keyguard
		cross-age tutoring

* Not appropriate for writing.

A Word About Alternate and Alternative

An *alternate assessment* is a substitute way of gathering information on the performance and progress of students who do not participate in the assessments used with the majority of students who attend schools. It is an alternate to the typical state test, and generally is reserved for students who are not working toward the state standards and who are not seeking a typical diploma (Ysseldyke, 1997). An *alternative assessment* would be another option to the current assessment being considered by a state or school district, but it is still assessing essentially the same content and for the same purpose(s).

Alternate and *alternative* instruction might parallel the general program *standards and benchmarks*, or be an extension or separate from the general education instruction presentation depending on the needs of the individual student. Alternate assessments may be recommended in conjunction with, or as the multi-disciplinary team determines appropriate, in a format other than the general assessments. Many States are currently developing extended standards for alternate assessments. Some are developing additional standards. In Table 8 are examples of general instructional *standards* or indicators extended to be used as an alternate.

Table 8. Examples of Standards and Alternate Standards

English Language Arts Content Standard: Reading Student reads independently and proficiently, self-selected, and assigned text for a variety of purposes.	
General Instructional Standard or Indicator	**Alternate Instructional Standard or Indicator**
Student knows and is able to apply knowledge of beginning print and book concepts such as: left to right; knowledge of letters, words, and sentences; understands that print conveys a message.	Student knows and is able to apply knowledge of beginning print and book concepts such as: left to right; knowledge of letters, words, and sentences; understands that print conveys a message. Students will recognize letters of their name, survival words, PCS symbols, sight words and word labels.
Student knows and is able to acquire and apply phonemic awareness such as discriminating sounds; blending sounds; segmenting sounds; can manipulate sounds within words.	Student knows and is able to acquire and apply phonemic awareness such as discriminating sounds; blending sounds; segmenting sounds; can manipulate sounds within words. Student will pay attention and listen to voice, poetry, music, and songs.

In many instances there may be no general standard to meet a set of identified student goal(s). The following is an example of a separate or additional instructional standard intended to be used as an alternate beyond extending general education standards. This Personal Management standard is from Maryland's Independence Mastery Assessment Program (IMAP) and matches components of the federal frameworks (19th Annual Report to Congress, Appendix C, 1997), specifically aspects of Social Relationships, Home, Self determination and Neighborhood and Community.

> ***Personal Management:*** Students will demonstrate their ability in the following areas: personal needs, appropriate health and safety practices, managing routines, and participating in transition planning with adult service providers. Within this outcome

there are a variety of indicators or benchmarks at specific age levels. These standards then become the basis for an alternate assessment.

Duration of Accommodations, Modifications, and Alternates

Instructional and assessment accommodations, modifications, and alternates can vary in duration. They may be fading, periodic, or continuous. These types relate to the degree of their application as well as their permanence relative to the student's need.

Fading. These accommodations, modifications, and alternates have three stages and use the essence of instructional interventions: (1) introducing, (2) practicing and revising, and (3) extinguishing. The purpose of this type of accommodation, modification, or alternate is to help the student benefit from instruction until the student can independently function without its support, or continue to function after obtaining the targeted knowledge. The outcome of this most frequently used type is the eventual fading of the accommodation, modification, or alternate as the student's system of acquiring content becomes independent. These types would primarily be used in early grades in modifications for skill and content areas. An example is extended time to complete a task.

Periodic. These accommodations, modifications, and alternates exist between *fading* (those anticipated to be extinguished) and the third type, *continuous* (those not anticipated to be extinguished). This is where the interchange between teacher and student determines what combination(s) best fit the student's needs, where the friction point is between functioning level and skill acquisition, or the amount of support and scaffolding needed for growth and progress. The instructional purpose is to determine an appropriate set of supports and services for a comfortable independent learning level. An example is seating in the front of the room and using a phonic rather than basal approach to reading. After mastery the student may not need to sit in the front of the room, or require the phonic support.

Continuous. These are the accommodations, modifications and alternate that will seldom or never change. These may include audio amplification, the use of Braille or a wheelchair. The duration of this type is more permanent and has its own set of circumstances, which is matched to instruction and the permanence of the student's need.

Uses of Accommodations, Modifications, and Alternates

Accommodations, modifications, and alternates can be used in several ways. The following are some of the uses to consider:

- As part of the daily instructional routine, and in classroom and school assessments.
- To provide the student an opportunity to participate; not to be used as an advantage.
- To provide the student a comfort level when using it with the intervention, and to know when it is no longer necessary.
- To provide teacher training to understand how to implement the intervention(s).
- To increase teacher awareness of when and how to modify, fade, or develop new interventions for instruction.
- To assist interventions in becoming more accepted with an increased level of understanding for all teachers to implement appropriately.
- As interventions become increasingly accepted, the community at large, including business and workplace environments, should be able to provide an appropriate range of interventions to their employees easily and cost effectively.

It is important to remember that to be useful, accommodations, modifications, or alternates must be instructionally relevant, easily applied, cost effective, and complementary to the student's learning style.

Limitations of Accommodations, Modifications, and Alternates

There are several possible limitations in the use of accommodations, modifications and alternates. Some of these are addressed here.

Cost is one of the main limitations to accommodations, modifications, and alternates that are becoming more universally implemented. Some districts have more resources than others and tend to use the cost factor as a limitation rather than seek unique additional supports to provide what individual students need.

It is sometimes suggested that accommodations might afford the student an unfair advantage or greater opportunities to learn than are available to other students. More research must be done on score comparability and validity of certain accommodations, modifications, and alternates for both instruction and assessment.

Lack of a knowledge base on the part of the multi-disciplinary team making recommendations for particular students is an important limitation. It is important for teams to know that students' background and learning style may limit recommendations.

Procedure and Process for Accommodations, Modifications, and Alternates

The general instructional procedure or process used by many teachers is an ongoing analytical process, with continuous reviews and self-assessment from the student. The following is a suggested process for accommodations, modifications, and alternates:

1. Analyze the instructional situation and the task/goal the student is expected to achieve.

2. Determine the student's comfort level with the intervention and the instructional task or goal possibilities. The task may be new and the accommodation familiar, or the task may be familiar and the accommodation new. What is the risk-taking ability of the student? How is the student able to adapt in similar situations with any accommodation, modification, or alternate?

3. Maintain a student-teacher dialogue on how the student assimilated the instructional task/goal and how he/she felt about the accommodation(s), modification(s), or alternate. Continuous feedback between the teacher and the student will provide a process to continue to evaluate the efficacy of any accommodations, modifications or alternate approaches.

Matching Purposes of Assessment and Assessment Decisions

Tests traditionally have served many purposes. In *Testing in American Schools: Asking the Right Questions* (OTA, 1992) it was suggested that testing serves three basic functions: (1) to aid teachers and students in classroom instruction, (2) to monitor or assess systemwide outcomes and standards, and (3) to inform decisions about the selection, placement, and credentialing of individuals. The tests are similar in that they assist in decision making; however, they differ in the kinds of information they provide, the decisions that can be derived from results, and the policy or administrative constraints and guidelines under which the tests are administered (see Table 9). When the general public sees these factors becoming confused with their perception of testing, decisions and permissions regarding intentions, results, and decisions may become blurred.

With multiple purposes of testing and, especially for students with disabilities whose abilities have broad ranges, the notion exists that for some tests some students are not represented by their abilities. Students are sometimes labeled in-between, in a gray area, or are exempted from testing in general. The issue of trying to serve two or more purposes with a test can make decisions regarding accommodations, modifications, and alternatives for instruction and assessments cumbersome and confusing. IEP team members, for example, may be concerned

Table 9. Characteristics of Tests Used for Different Purposes

Overall Purpose	Outcome
Classroom Progress	Provides information related to set of criteria. May be used in relation to classroom instruction or curricular direction or redirection. Provides detailed information about specific skills. Linked to content. Tracks progress. Provides feedback to student, parent and teacher. Administered as needed, variable frequency and has the greatest administrative flexibility. Assist student learning from errors. Identifying teacher intervention points. Direct link between testing and subject studied.
System Accountability: • School Level • National Level	Provides general information, not necessarily student instructionally specific information. Describes performance of groups, schools districts, and states. Used for college entrance, advanced or special plaements.
Student Accountability	Assessments may be required for promotion or graduation.

that a student at a particular grade level but at a different skill level should be given an assessment intended for school or district accountability at an off-grade-level. Policy issues may have additional positive or negative effects on the decisions educators and parents need to make relative to testing and instructional assistance.

As previously discussed, accommodations, modifications and alternate assessments may vary as to the purpose, decisions, and policy constraints of the assessment. Depending on the framework that identifies the extent of a particular construct, standard, or outcome, decisions should be made based on those purposes. For example, writing a letter to persuade, an 8th grade outcome activity, the IEP team must ask, "Is the student in grade 8, pursuing that outcome or standard?" If the student is, then the participation question is answered. If the answer is yes, then it is also possible that the allowable accommodations, or corresponding modifications necessary for the student in instruction, may or may not be allowable for that test. If it is a classroom test it may be allowable, if it is for comparison to other student or group results, perhaps not.

Many states are currently suggesting that IEP teams ask a series of questions to determine test inclusion and appropriate accommodations. Some assumptions must be made not only about

the opportunity for the student to be exposed to the content, the ability, skill level and needs of the student, but also the purpose of the test. A series of questions might be framed as follows:

1. Is the student pursuing the same standards (outcomes, constructs) and benchmarks as the other students in the classroom at the same grade level? If YES take the same test, same accommodations. If NO go to question 2.

2. Is the student pursuing the same standards (outcomes, constructs) and benchmarks as the other students in the classroom but at a different grade level? If YES take the same test, same accommodations. If NO go to question 3.

3. Is the student pursuing similar but expanded standards (outcomes, constructs) and benchmarks as some of the other students in the classroom? If YES take the same test, same accommodations. If NO go to question 4.

4. Is the student pursuing exclusively the expanded standards (outcomes, constructs) and benchmarks different (from an extended set of standards) and individualized from the other students in the classroom? If YES do not take the same test. Use the same accommodations and supports as in instruction. If NO go to question 2.

Of importance in the above series of questions to the IEP team are four underlying conditions that need to be reviewed: (1) the standards—extended or different; (2) the grade level issue—how many grades; (3) the test purpose—accountability, instruction, credentialing; and (4) appropriate accommodations. Marzano 8 Questions You Should Ask (www.mcrel.org) suggests that subject and general reasoning standards be established as the core of the curriculum; those grade level benchmarks be written for K-8 and course descriptions for high school; that a variety of frequent assessment techniques be utilized in classroom instruction; and that externally developed traditional tests and performance tests are used to compare performance of students to other students and the norming group.

The IEP team may still be left with the grade level issue. For how many grade levels might a student be pursuing a benchmark or extended benchmark and still be pursuing the same standard or construct? Applying the purpose of the test to the mix, if the intent of the test is to determine school accountability, then are the students at a grade level in line with the benchmark? Finally, are the accommodations appropriate for the student, the test, and the benchmarks? Students with disabilities may or may not require accommodations depending on instructional content, skill level, or purpose of the test. Whether or not students with disabilities should be included in the school accountability pool of test takers should be answered in the affirmative, especially if the consequences of test results will be used to make decisions about school programs and resources.

In reviewing test purpose and students with disabilities, skill level, and the benefit of inclusion in assessment both need to be analyzed carefully by the IEP team. IEP goals and State or district standards (outcomes) and benchmarks usually are not the same. IEP goals are annual goals; the standards are generally much broader. Team members will want to review the consequences of not participating in assessments as well as the consequences of participating.

In the Gray Area

As State and district-wide assessments continue to include students with disabilities, and as possible consequences for schools and students increase, students are increasingly identified as "in between" or "in a gray area" with respect to the curriculum and the testing. The first level of decisions involves a policy agreement at the state level between assessment, instruction, and special education for statewide assessments. A second level of decisions involves district and classroom policy and procedures for including students with disabilities in testing and instruction.

According to recent *Reports to Congress*, the most prevalent disabilities, and the approximate percentages in each are:

- 52% Learning Disabilities
- 22% Speech
- 12% Mentally Retarded
- 14% Other

Of these groups, students with learning disabilities and those receiving speech services could reasonably be considered. Of the remaining two categories, it has been estimated that only less than 2% (Ysseldyke, Thurlow, Erickson, Gabrys, Haigh, Trimble & Gong, 1998) could be reasonably considered for the alternate assessment. This leaves approximately 24% of students who might reasonably be considered for a specific situation of assessment or instruction "between" the current general range of instruction and individual instructional level needed for a particular student.

Using the scenario of a State, school, or district *accountability assessment*, one would want all students with disabilities to participate, 98% or more in the regular assessment, with accommodations if necessary, and 2% or less in an alternate assessment. In this instance there would be no students "between," they should all be included as part of the assessment. A second scenario of *student accountability* for passing a standard or test for graduation, one would want all students to pursue the standard, for example, a diploma or certificate, with accommodations if necessary. In this instance there would also be no students "between," they should all be included as pursuing graduation. The third scenario, *current instructional level*, is situational and conceivably any students could be "between," requiring accommodations and or

modifications as necessary to master the instructional content. Labeling students as "between" does not appear to help in either identifying or assisting the student with special needs.

Discussion

Both regulations and practice have made a distinction between accommodations and modifications. Accommodations are more assessment- or test-centered. They ask the questions, "Can this intervention be used while maintaining reliability and validity?" "Is the 'playing field level' for all students when some are given accommodations?" The accommodations are thus assessment- or test-centered interventions that may or may not be allowed in the testing situation.

Modifications are more instructional- or program-centered. They ask the questions, "What are the array of interventions necessary for the student to master a topic or subject?" "Is this all that can be employed to ensure the best learning environment?" The modifications are thus instruction- or program-centered interventions that best provide fertile ground for learning.

There are obviously many interventions that are appropriate for both classroom and assessment applications. For testing, accommodations here have been referring to more large-scale, national, state or district-wide assessments, while modifications have been viewed as more classroom ongoing instructional interventions and assessments. While accommodations have been generally accepted test variations, extended time, marking in test booklet, large print, etc., modifications should by their nature be boundless, whatever is possible that provides positive results for learning. The similarity of the terms accommodations and modifications and the interchanging use of the two has led to some confusion.

The following is a typical policy determination: "If the student needs an accommodation (generally accepted test variation) and it is on their IEP and is used in instruction, then they can employ that accommodation in testing situations." If what happens is that more and more IEPs include accommodations, they may de facto limit instruction to accommodation interventions.

Both accommodations and modifications should be discussed and reviewed in the broad context of progressing in the general education program. Teachers, parents, and policymakers should be aware and make aware to the public the differences in learning and the variation of methodology necessary to allow an opportunity for learning for all students.

References

Bechard, S. (1998). *Accommodations to improve learning and performance: Leader's guide.* Colorado Department of Education. Denver, CO.

Brauen, M., O'Reilly, F., Heid, C., Gentry, R., & Morrissey, P. (1994). *Assessment guidelines: Outcomes-based accountability for students with disabilities.* Westat.

Brown, G. E. (1992). *Testing in American schools: Asking the right questions.* Congress of the United States, Office of Technology Assessment. Washington, D.C.

DeStefano, L. (1993). *The effects of standards and assessment on students in special education* (Synthesis Report 10). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, National Center on Educational Outcomes.

Edwards, F. *Test administration procedures for adults with disabilities.* Graduate Education Diploma, (GED). Form L-15 Accommodations Request for Learning Disabilities and/or Attention Deficit with/or without Hyperactivity Disorder. Washington, D.C.

Gloecker, L., et.al. Test Access and Modification for Individuals with Disabilities. (1995). University of the State of New York, State Education Agency, Office of Vocational and Educational Services and Office for Special Education Services. Albany N.Y.

Haigh, J., & Rosenberg, K. (1998). *Requirements for accommodating, excusing, and exempting students in Maryland assessment programs.* Maryland State Department of Education.

Hargest, J., et.al. (1998). *Accommodations and modifications guide.* Harford County Public Schools, Office of Special Education Programs. Harford County Public Schools, Harford County, MD.

Healy, S. (1998). *State of the art: Toward ensuring classroom success for every student, a handbook for educators.* Office of Instruction and Program Development, Department of Academic Programs. Montgomery County Public Schools, Montgomery County, MD.

Joint Advisory Committee. (1994). *Principles for fair student assessment practices for education in Canada.* Edmonton, Alberta: Author.

Jung, C. G. (1954). *C. G. Jung Psychology and Education, Extracted from The Development of Personality Volume 17, Collected Works.* Translated by R. F. C. Hull. Bollingen Series, Princeton University Press, Princeton, N. J.

Modifications. Pennsylvania State Department of Education Handout.

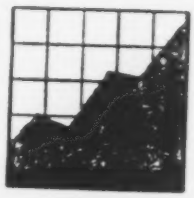
Schmeister, C. B., Kane, M. T., & Brennan, R. L. (1983). Testing the handicapped: An issue of comparability. *The Bar Examiner*, 16-23.

Tindal, J. (1998). *Determining when accommodated test administrations are comparable to standard test administrations*. Council of Chief State School Officers, Washington, D.C.

Thurlow, M. L., Ysseldyke, J. E., & Silverstein, B. (1993). *Testing accommodations for students with disabilities: A review of the literature* (Synthesis Report 4). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, National Center on Educational Outcomes.

Thurlow, M., Ysseldyke, J., & Olsen, K. (1998). *Self-study guide for the development of statewide assessments that include students with disabilities*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, National Center on Educational Outcomes.

Weston, T. (1999, CCSSO). *Reporting issues and strategies for disabled students in large scale Aassessments*. Washington, D.C.



NATIONAL
CENTER ON
EDUCATIONAL
OUTCOMES

University of Minnesota • 350 Elliot Hall
75 East River Road • Minneapolis, MN 55455
612.626.1530 • Fax 612.624.0879
http://www.coled.umn.edu/NCEO

The College of Education
& Human Development
UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

BEST COPY AVAILABLE